

VZCZCXRO9444
PP RUEHCD RUEHGD RUEHHO RUEHMC RUEHNG RUEHNL RUEHRD RUEHRS RUEHTM
DE RUEHME #2079/01 1971946
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 161946Z JUL 09
FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7462
INFO RUEHXC/ALL US CONSULATES IN MEXICO COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC
RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHINGTON DC
RHMFIUU/HQ USNORTHCOM
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MEXICO 002079

SENSITIVE, SIPDIS

NSC FOR O'REILLY

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [CVIS](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [SMIG](#) [MX](#) [EZ](#) [CA](#)

SUBJECT: O CANADA, WE STAND ON GUARD FOR THEE

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: On July 13, 2009, Canada announced that it will implement a visa requirement on travelers from Mexico and the Czech Republic, effective at 12:01 am, July 17. The putative reason, according to Immigration Minister Jason Kenney is to quell the flow of applicants from both countries seeking political asylum who reside in Canada at the expense of Canadian taxpayers while waiting for the adjudication of their applications. The Czech Republic has already recalled its ambassador and imposed visa requirements on Canadian diplomats and "businessmen." Mexican reaction has been less acerbic, although many media and local sources have suggested that the change is an indirect U.S. immigration policy carried out by its all-too-willing northern neighbors. END SUMMARY.

LIFE IN A NORTHERN TOWN ... FREE OF CHARGE

12. (SBU) The imposition of visa requirements on Mexican and Czech political refugees has a clear economic motive, as the cost of each political asylum seeker to Canadian taxpayers is estimated at 30,293 USD per annum. According to Canadian officials, while Mexican asylum seekers comprise 25% of all refugee claimants in Canada, only 10 - 11% of this applicant pool are eventually approved. Once an immigrant claims refugee status in Canada, he is eligible for all public benefits, including welfare and work authorization; refugee claims can take up to two years to process. (NOTE: No data is available on the percentage of Czech applicants who were approved during this same time period, but they are predominantly of Roma extraction claiming persecution. Since the requirements for Czech visas were abolished in 2007, about 2000 applicants have sought asylum. END NOTE.) By the time the claims are adjudicated and denied the immigrant has often already established ties in Canada (spouse, children, etc.) that allow him to stay in Canada using other methods.

IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK ... OR WHAT THEY SAID

13. (SBU) While many media sources have assumed that the more than 10,000 Mexicans seeking political asylum in 2008 were fleeing drug-related violence, the applicants themselves provided a very different reason. According to a Canadian government source, the majority of the Mexican refugees were seeking asylum on the basis of persecution due to sexual orientation. Roma have been historically subject to systematic racial persecution in Eastern Europe, but homosexuals in Mexico are not generally victims of sustained society-wide persecution tacitly sanctioned by authorities. Canadian officials stated to ConOff that the coupling of Mexico and the Czech Republic was intended to mitigate any charges of prejudice against one particular country.

APPLICATIONS AS SLOW AS MAPLE SYRUP

14. (SBU) The Mexican government reaction was measured, but negative.

In a press release on this matter, Mexico's Foreign Ministry officially expressed the government's regret over the policy change and was quick to blame organizations engaged in smuggling as well as the Canadian government's own bureaucracy. According to the Mexican Foreign Ministry's press release, these organizations "have taken advantage of the lag time in Canadian political asylum applications, whose excessive prolongation provided an attractive means to facilitate illegitimate cases." Akin to smuggling organizations aiming to deliver willing and paying Mexicans across the U.S. border, according to Mexican government officials, these Canadian-based groups are allegedly responsible for the vast majority of all the fraud committed, as evidenced by the fact that "ninety percent of the cases are rejected." Official government sources say they will continue to try to amend the measure, as well as crack down on said smuggling organizations.

SRE's Assistant Director of the Office of Canadian Affairs Deyanira Granda Almanza told PolOff that it had been taken somewhat by surprise with GOC announcement of the visa requirement. [NOTE: A Canadian Embassy source told ConOff, the Mexican government was not warned in advance of this announcement. END NOTE.] She conveyed frustration that the GOC had allowed for such a short window for implementation - essentially four days - noting the inconvenience experienced by Mexicans who already made plans to travel to Canada after July 17 and now needed to obtain a visa. According to the press, the GOC proved unwilling to extend the implementation date in response to GOM appeals. Granda signaled Mexico presently did not plan to implement a reciprocal visa requirement on Canadians seeking to visit Mexico and was not aware if Mexico planned to raise this

MEXICO 00002079 002 OF 002

issue at the upcoming North American Summit.

Mexican politicians took a stronger line in speaking to the new requirement. The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) Head of the Senate Political Coordination Committee, Manlio Fabio Beltrones suggested that Canadians be required to get visas for Mexico, while a senior member of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), Carlos Navarrete spoke for many of his compatriots when he termed the measure "anti-Mexican."

NO SPANISH, NO WARNING ... THE AMERICANS MUST BE BEHIND IT

15. (SBU) Reactions from the media and public indicate frustration and suggest United States complicity in the decision. Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) has been working to increase processing capacity in Mexico City by adding fourteen Canadian diplomats on temporary assignment. Application fees run about 69 USD per single entry visa and 138 USD for multiple entries, and with few exceptions, the Canadians are not interviewing applicants. CIC plans on expanding its operations to include 60 more locally-engaged staff, as well as hiring a service center to help processing. Mexican nationals who have visited the Canadian chancery in Mexico City in the last couple of days have complained of the short notice, "officials who do not speak Spanish" and a certain amount of, "mistreatment [of] and disdain" for the applicants. Others point out that when Brazil and Ecuador decided on similar measures in 2005 a five-week run-up to the implementation of visa requirements attenuated any possible pushback. The Canadian government is also asking Mexican visa applicants to provide health and police certificates, ostensibly to prove that they neither have a communicable disease nor a criminal record, restrictions that strike locals as somewhat severe. Some Mexican media outlets have implied that the United States had a hand in implementing this policy, and used its influence with its northern neighbor for its own good.

(LESS) NORTHERN EXPOSURE

16. (SBU) COMMENT: This "July surprise" will clearly fuel the short-term tensions between Canada and Mexico, just three weeks before Prime Minister Harper travels to Guadalajara for the North American Leaders Summit. Ultimately, however, it could improve

Canadian-U.S. border security. USG has long been aware that numerous Mexican nationals have benefitted from Canada's lack of tourist visa requirements to cross into and assume residence in the U.S. illegally. While an uptick in Mexican visa applications to the United States is not expected, suspicion regarding the U.S. role in Canada's decision will persist over the coming weeks despite our public guidance that this is a bilateral affair between two sovereign countries. END COMMENT.

FEELEY